



Task Force 05

INCLUSIVE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Algorithmic Transparency in Digital Work Platforms: a Policy Proposal for Sustainable Development in the Digital Era within the G20 Context

Caroline Coelho, Researcher, Institute of Advanced Studies at University of Sao Paulo on Responsible Artificial Intelligence (Brazil).

Atahualpa Blanchet, Researcher, Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law (Germany).



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Abstract

This public policy brief proposes a comprehensive and innovative approach to addressing the issue of algorithmic transparency in digital work platforms. With an emphasis on promoting justice and equity in labor relations, the specific recommendations aim to position the G20 in its working groups as a proactive advocate for effective regulation of work on digital platforms, driving the global agenda towards a more transparent, fair, and inclusive work environment.

Information about the criteria used to monitor and evaluate workers' performance should be accessible to digital platform workers subject to algorithmic management tools. Recognizing this principle by the G20 could inform the debate on Platform Work within the International Labour Organization. This proposal, based on extensive research, aims to address the application of this ethical AI principle, seeking to ensure the right to transparency and algorithmic equity in digital-era employment relationships.

Contributing to sustainable and equitable development in the digital age means using technology responsibly and ethically to promote human well-being, protect the environment, and create a fairer and more inclusive society for all.

Keywords: Algorithm Management, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Work Platforms, Artificial Intelligence.

Diagnosis of the Issue



Work through digital platforms has become a reality in many parts of the world in recent years, transforming the lives of thousands of people who use apps and the services they provide¹.

The social and economic impacts of digital platform work have challenged the application of the parameters of current labor concepts, requiring strategic players to take a stand on the need to build and apply regulations and policies that take into account the scope and complexity of the phenomenon. In a context of profound transformations, marked by the digitalization and relocation of labor relations, the G20 is a fundamental space for building consensus aimed at reducing inequalities, guaranteeing rights and promoting social justice².

Remote work platforms, known as "cloudwork", open up the possibility of working in a variety of fields using mobile devices from anywhere with an internet connection, creating a new generation of workers (such as digital nomads) whose common denominator is algorithmic subordination³.

Artificial Intelligence management systems will therefore come to define elements of labor relations and production processes such as the distribution of tasks, monitoring, performance evaluation and decision-making, including on individual or collective promotions or dismissals.

¹ International Labour Organization.(2021).“The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work.” World Employment and Social Outlook report. Geneva, Switzerland, p. 53.

² Atahualpa Blanchet. (2024). The G20 and the Regulation of Platform Work by Apps. G20 Brazil Website: <https://www.g20.org/en/news/the-g20-and-the-regulation-of-platform-work-by-apps>

³ Fairwork. Work in the Planetary Labour Market Fairwork Cloudwork Ratings. (2021).

Issue and research-based evidence:

Algorithmic opacity in digital work platforms creates harmful information asymmetry for workers⁴. Research has identified that the lack of transparency⁵ negatively impacts worker autonomy and satisfaction, raising concerns about fairness in labor relations⁶.

Relevance to G20 agenda and priorities:

In this vein, Algorithmic transparency⁷ is a principle recognized by the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence⁸, by the European Artificial Intelligence Act⁹, and also by the Mercosur Declaration of Principles of Human Rights about AI¹⁰.

Algorithms, seen as true institutions that stipulate and enforce rules of social control, must align with ethical principles within the framework of Responsible Artificial Intelligence. And in this sense, the world of work is a cutting-edge space for regulating aspects of human-algorithm interaction¹¹.

This proposal aligns with G20 priorities to promote inclusive solutions for global challenges, recognizing the need to effectively regulate work on digital platforms and

⁴ Dominik Hangartner, Daniel Kopp and Michael Siegenthaler Monitoring hiring discrimination through online recruitment platforms. *Nature* 589, 572–576 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-03136-0>

⁵ Ane Aranguiz. (2021). Spain's platform workers win algorithm transparency. *Social Europe*. Available at: <https://www.socialeurope.eu/spains-platform-workers-win-algorithm-transparency> (accessed 16 Mar. 2024).

⁶ GPAI 2022. AI for Fair Work: AI for Fair Work Report, November 2022, Global Partnership on AI.

⁷ Jessica Fjeld; Nele Achten; Hannah Hilligoss; Adam Nagy Christopher and Madhulika Srikuma. *Principled Artificial Intelligence: Mapping Consensus in Ethical and Rights-based Approaches to Principles for AI*. Berkman Klein Center. 2020.

⁸ UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. (2021).

⁹ European Artificial Intelligence Act (2024).

¹⁰ Instituto de Políticas Públicas en Derechos Humanos del Mercosur. *Mercosur Declaration of Principles of Human Rights about AI* (2023).

¹¹ Ricardo F. Mendonça, Fernando Filgueiras, and Virgílio Almeida, *Algorithms as Institutions, Algorithmic Institutionalism: The Changing Rules of Social and Political Life*. Oxford (2023).

guarantee the fundamental right of collective bargaining for the platform workers to discuss the main impacts of the algorithm management systems.

Previous policy summaries and recommendations:

T20 can highlight the need for an innovative approach that places algorithmic transparency at the core of digital platform work regulation. This proposal represents an evolution in understanding the importance of fairness and clarity in digital labor relations.

Recommendations for the G20

Transparency principle:

Recommend that digital platforms clearly and accessibly disclose the algorithmic criteria used to monitor and evaluate worker performance.

Right to explanation:

Establish the inalienable right of workers to detailed explanations about automated decisions affecting their status or remuneration.

Worker participation:

Promote active inclusion of workers in the process of defining, reviewing, and adjusting algorithms used in platforms.

Protection against discrimination:

Implement robust mechanisms to prevent algorithmic discrimination, ensuring that automated decisions do not reproduce unjust inequalities.

Collective bargaining:

Recognize workers' right to collective bargaining on issues related to algorithmic management, including fair algorithm design, explainability, data access, and the right to contest algorithmic decisions.

Internal bipartite committees:

Propose the creation of internal bipartite committees composed of representatives from workers and platforms to discuss and negotiate the implementation or alteration of programming criteria for algorithmic management systems. These committees should ensure equal participation and seek consensus on issues related to fairness, transparency, and algorithmic impact on work.

Intercommunication channels:

Establish effective and accessible communication channels between workers and platforms, allowing for continuous feedback, issue resolution, and information exchange on working conditions, remuneration, and related matters.

Freedom of association:

Guarantee workers' right to freely associate and organize in unions or other forms of collective representation, without retaliation from platforms, thus promoting collective bargaining and defending their interests.

Workers' privacy:

Establish strict regulations to protect workers' privacy, ensuring that their personal information and sensitive data are stored and used securely and ethically by platforms.

Data protection:

Strengthen data protection regulations to ensure that workers' information is collected, stored, and used securely and ethically by platforms, in compliance with privacy laws and transparency principles.

Ethical data management:

Establish ethical standards for the management and use of workers' data by platforms, including informed consent, specific purpose, and data minimization.

Supervision and accountability:

Establish supervision and accountability mechanisms to ensure the ethical and fair use of algorithms in the workplace, with regulatory bodies monitoring compliance with regulations and applying sanctions for violations.

Open-source systems:

Encourage the development and adoption of open-source algorithm systems on platforms, allowing for greater public audit and scrutiny of algorithm operations and promoting trust and transparency.

Access to data history:

Allow workers access to their own data history and information about the ranking criteria used by platforms, enabling greater transparency and understanding of evaluation and ranking processes.

Dual access key:

Implement dual access key systems, where both workers and platforms have control over data and algorithm access and usage, ensuring greater equity and accountability in technology use.

"Human-in-the-loop" clauses:

Establish contractual clauses ensuring human intervention in decision-making processes that may significantly affect workers, ensuring that important decisions are always supervised and validated by qualified humans.

Automatic dismissal ban:

Implement regulations prohibiting the automatic dismissal of workers by algorithms, ensuring that all dismissal decisions are reviewed by humans and justified based on transparent criteria.

Non-discrimination in recruitment:

Prohibit discriminatory practices in the recruitment and selection of workers by algorithms, ensuring that hiring decisions are based solely on relevant competencies and qualifications, regardless of characteristics such as gender, age, race, or ethnicity.

Fair task distribution:

Implement policies to ensure fair task distribution among workers, avoiding the concentration of precarious or undervalued work in certain groups based on protected characteristics.

Combat algorithmic bias in evaluation process:

Implement measures to identify and mitigate algorithmic biases in performance evaluation, including the use of ethical artificial intelligence techniques and regular audits.

Continuous training:

Promote continuous training programs for workers on the use of algorithms in platform work, aiming to develop digital skills, increase understanding of ethical issues, and adapt to technological changes.

Right to disconnect:

Ensure that workers have the right to disconnect from work outside of working hours, protecting their free time and promoting a healthy work-life balance.

Sustainable development:

Ensuring and promoting responsible AI business practices in the efficient use of digital resources and the adoption of technologies that contribute to decarbonization within the framework of human-algorithm interaction in production processes and labor relations.

Scenario of Outcomes:

The adoption of the recommendations outlined here represents a pivotal moment in the quest for greater equity and dignity in the digital labor landscape across G20 countries. By embracing these guidelines, decision-makers have the potential to catalyze a transformational shift toward more inclusive, fair, and transparent work environments, with profound implications for workers, businesses, and society as a whole.

Protecting privacy and data rights:

In an era of increasing digitization and data-driven decision-making, protecting workers' privacy and data rights is paramount. By implementing clear rules and safeguards, decision-makers can ensure that algorithmic systems respect individuals' privacy and comply with data protection regulations. This not only mitigates the risk of abuse and exploitation but also fosters trust and confidence among workers, thereby enhancing their sense of dignity and autonomy in the workplace.

Ensuring ethical algorithmic design and oversight:

Establishing clear guidelines for the design and implementation of algorithmic systems is essential for preventing potential harms and abuses. By promoting ethical design principles and ensuring robust oversight mechanisms, decision-makers can mitigate the risks of bias, discrimination, and unfairness inherent in algorithmic decision-making. This not only protects the rights and dignity of workers but also fosters trust and confidence in algorithmic systems, enhancing their acceptance and effectiveness in the workplace.

Facilitating cross-border cooperation and knowledge sharing:

Promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing among G20 countries is essential for addressing common challenges and advancing shared goals. By facilitating cross-border cooperation and exchange of best practices, decision-makers can harness the collective expertise and resources of G20 countries to develop effective solutions to complex issues.

This not only enhances the capacity of individual countries to address emerging challenges but also fosters a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, promoting global stability and prosperity.

Strengthening regulatory enforcement and accountability:

Enhancing regulatory enforcement and accountability mechanisms is essential for ensuring compliance with labor standards and safeguarding the rights of workers. By strengthening regulatory agencies and empowering them to investigate and sanction violations effectively, decision-makers can create a strong deterrent against abusive practices and promote a culture of compliance.

Promoting dialogue, dignity, and reducing asymmetries:

Emphasizing dialogue, dignity, and respect in the workplace is essential for fostering a culture of mutual trust and cooperation. By affirming these values, decision-makers can create an environment where all workers feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute meaningfully to their workplaces. Moreover, by reducing power imbalances and promoting transparency in decision-making processes, decision-makers can cultivate a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, thus narrowing socioeconomic disparities and promoting social cohesion.

Empowering workers through participation:

Empowering workers to participate in decision-making processes related to algorithmic management is key to creating a more inclusive and equitable work environment. By involving workers in the design and implementation of algorithmic systems, decision-makers can harness their insights and expertise to create systems that are fair, transparent, and responsive to their needs. This not only enhances worker satisfaction and productivity but also fosters a culture of collaboration, trust, and mutual respect in the workplace, thus promoting social cohesion and economic prosperity.

Combating informality and upholding fundamental rights:

Addressing the prevalence of informal labor practices is a critical step toward ensuring that all workers enjoy the protections and benefits afforded by formal employment relationships. By establishing clear regulations and promoting formalization, decision-makers can dismantle barriers to decent work and foster a culture of compliance with labor standards. Furthermore, by safeguarding the fundamental right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, decision-makers can empower workers to advocate for their rights and negotiate fairer terms and conditions, thereby reducing power imbalances and promoting social justice.

Promoting continuous learning and non-discrimination:

Encouraging ongoing training and development opportunities for workers is essential for ensuring their continued success in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. By investing in training programs and promoting lifelong learning, decision-makers can empower workers to adapt to technological changes, acquire new skills, and enhance their employability. Furthermore, by combating discrimination in recruitment and task

distribution based on gender, age, race, or ethnicity, decision-makers can create a more inclusive and diverse workforce, fostering innovation and driving economic growth.

Enhancing investment and market predictability:

Creating a regulatory framework that promotes transparency and accountability in algorithmic management practices can have far-reaching benefits for businesses and investors. By eliminating regulatory gaps and harmonizing regulations across G20 countries, decision-makers can enhance market predictability and create a level playing field for businesses. This, in turn, fosters investor confidence, stimulates investment, and promotes economic growth, thus contributing to the creation of more inclusive and resilient economies.

Fostering competition and consumer trust:

Transparent and accountable business practices are essential for fostering trust and confidence among consumers and investors alike. By promoting transparency in algorithmic decision-making processes, decision-makers can foster fair competition and ensure that companies compete based on the quality of their products and services rather than opaque or unethical practices. This not only benefits consumers by enabling informed decision-making but also fosters a more competitive and dynamic marketplace, driving innovation and promoting consumer welfare.

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